

Public Meeting to Discuss HCP Conservation Strategies
November 18, 2005
Southwestern Land Office
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Missoula

Meeting notes transcribed here from posters in the meeting room:

Present were:

DNRC: Gary Frank, David Groeschl, Mike McGrath, Brian Manning, Sarah Pierce,
Mike O'Herron, Jim Bower

USFWS: Tim Bodurtha

Idaho Department of Lands: Richard Furman, Patrick Seymour
Jane Adams

Bruce Farling, Montana Trout Unlimited

Minette Johnson, Defenders of Wildlife

Friends of the Wild Swan: Arlene Montgomery, Steve Kelly

Public input recorded on posters:

General:

- Make bid solicitation (for consultant) available from Dept of Admin.
- What is availability of administrative record from 1) State of Montana and 2) Federal (USFWS)?
- What is access for public meeting content and other draft or final information?
- Quantify take and contribution to recovery.
- What is the role of Land Board?
- Address the cumulative level of take, reflecting other agencies' actions and other HCPs.
- Compared to a baseline without DNRC ownership, is DNRC land a sink or source for species?
- The HCP shifts recovery burden to other ownerships on smaller proportion of the landscape.
- Clarify how ITP can be issued in the Cabinet-Yaak?
- Make available: rationale for species covered by the HCP, questions looked at about those decisions, and species accounts.
- For all species, would like random 3rd party/independent monitoring.
- How were lands decided to be included/not included in HCP?
- How will emerging science be handled in this HCP?

- Recommendation: Adaptive management approach will address emerging science.

Grizzly Bear Strategy:

- Road densities, secure habitat
- Road building amounts are astronomical and a huge impact on grizzly bear security and bull trout
- Illegal use impacts from closed roads
- How many bears can we grow on landscape with HCP?
- Inadequate language about closing roads
- Conflict between minimizing roads and the reality that more roads will be constructed under the plan (cumulative impacts)
- Prefer multi-species approach to road issues (e.g., grizzly bear, bull trout); currently there in the strategy there is a disconnect
- Strategy needs to address habitat degradation versus just the current language on minimizing disturbance
- How does the grizzly bear strategy compare to current grizzly bear recovery science
- Effects of all-lawful purpose road easements, related developments, etc. on grizzly bear and aquatic habitats (e.g., swan river state forest)
- Concern about development on Plum Creek Timber Co and DNRC lands
- Uncertainty of 50 years of all-lawful purpose road easements with HCP no surprises clause
- No trigger to address opening access on DNRC lands
- Inadequate (discussion) measures on sanitation issues
- Elimination of security core on Stillwater State forest
- Rationale for move from 3/7 rest-rotation to 4/8 rest-rotation
- Time frame too short for FWS decisions on weed control and 8-year rest
- Need for habitat based criteria/analyses
- Loose language (i.e., wiggle room) in all conservation strategies in the commitments (e.g., “where practicable”, “adequate”)
- Unclear how timber permits and associated exceptions are dealt with in all conservation strategies
- Define “spring period” for all lands
- Is the definition for “spring period” adequate?

- Current road closures aren't effective; is the strategy proposing the same types of closures
- Define "rendered unusable" (pg 3-20)
- Seasonal closures proposed are not good option (IGBC)
- Weed control omission - species account versus strategy
- No core, no total road density commitment
- Need monitoring of illegal use of roads (pg. 3-32)
- Reclaimed and re-contoured roads still impact fisheries
- Impacts of temp roads depicted in analysis
- Concerns about DNRC's discretion outside of agreements made within NCDE sub-committee

Lynx Strategy

- Key linkages and movement corridors: how identified? how is movement affected?
- CWD:
 - Use of Graham et al. not related to lynx; "may not be adequate for wildlife" – false assurances
 - Blowdown: 1% of area would be left. Is this enough for lynx? What were historic conditions? What does the rules/plan intend?
 - Lynx species account says blowdown is important – how is uncertainty reflected in 50 year plan?
- Timber permits should not be an exception to the salvage and blowdown commitments.
- Winter foraging habitat should not be lumped in with summer foraging habitat – the rationale is inadequate.
- Definition for winter foraging habitat is too minimal.
- Missing citation: Ruggerio 1999. Lynx conservation strategy should give this more weight in U.S.
- Conservation strategy ignores science based species account information.
- 35/65% commitment is based on timber harvest consideration; there is no compromise for lynx (30/70%)
- Consideration of lynx isn't reflected.
- Reporting requirements should be spatial more than/ in addition to numerical.
- 2 den sites per square mile – what is definition? is this adequate for lynx?
- Species account says there should be 75 tons/acre over 3 acres for den site.
- Coal creek LMA 20 year delay for implementing strategy seems too long.

- Too much conversion of suitable habitat to non-suitable per decade (i.e. 15%).
- Exceptions and wiggle room language is a problem.
- Regarding 65/35% LMA commitment: apply Losensky specific information to Swan and Stillwater state forests.
- Explain any discrepancies with the LCAS

Aquatics Strategies

- Effects of DNRC management on fish (and other species) where DNRC has small % of watershed
- Roads: hoped for net reduction of roads (exposure of mineral soil) over 50 years from baseline risk.
- Language such as “minimize where practicable” needs to be tightened up.
- Transfer consultation with USFWS for listing package guidance
- Critical sites/needs for BT – how do these get protection greater than general guidelines?
- Inadequate strategy for intermittent streams and wetlands
- Biological objectives: what are they? what are the standards? what is the timeframe?
- Exceptions in the 25’ no harvest and 25-SPTH buffers, especially for fire salvage
- Adequacy of 25’ no-harvest zone (MT BT science team?)
- References cited in text are missing from literature cited section.
- CMZs are not adequate in context of side channels and 2-year floods
- Need clarification on stream temperature standard.
- Address winter stream temperatures, especially for CT
- There isn’t a sediment standard.
- What is the quantitative sediment monitoring?
- FWP presence/absence data is inadequate.
- If there is no data for an intermittent (or more) stream with no barrier, and it is connected to CT stream, assume presence.
- Suggestions to have:
 - net reduction in high-risk sites
 - net reduction in road crossings
 - look for ways to have necessary transportation systems and still reduce bare mineral soil exposure

- Bridges have technical gain for long term, compared to culverts.
- Will culverts left on recontoured (closed) roads be monitored? What is the time frame for monitoring?
- Standard for sediment: what triggers adaptive management?
- Fewer exceptions would help public acceptance of HCP.
- Explore alternatives for quantifying exceptions in RMZs.
- When BT was listed, adequate regulation mechanisms weren't in place. Mechanisms in HCP are same as those in place at time of listing.
- Seeing things in biological opinions that aren't appearing here.
- Timeframes for road connectivity inventory and corrective actions are too long
- Clarify sizing of culverts and bridges.
- Margin of safety: degraded baselines and adequate regulatory mechanisms.
- Too much self-monitoring; need random compliance monitoring from an independent entity.
- Doubt adequacy of thresholds, who has oversight? (e.g. 6-5, H)

Transition Lands Strategy

- no specific comments (other than those reflected in general comments to HCP)

end